

Message Text

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51

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 SAM-01

SAB-01 SAJ-01 ACDA-05 IO-10 A-01 SY-05 OPR-01 SCCT-01

OC-05 CCO-00 AID-05 /090 W

----- 013414

PR 041604Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3195

DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR

CONFIDENTIAL BEIRUT 2894

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS LE

SUBJECT: MORE CLASHES IN SIDON

REF: BEIRUT 2837

1. DEPT WILL DOUBTLESS HAVE NOTED FROM FBIS REPORTS
THAT ANOTHER INCIDENT OCCURED IN SIDON AT 1815 LOCAL
MAR 3, WHEN ARMY TRUCK TRANSPORTING LEBANESE SOLDIERS
TO THEIR UNITS IN SOUTH LEBANON WAS AMBUSHED ON MAIN
COASTAL ROAD BY "ARMED ELEMENTS" FIRING ROCKETS AND
MACHINE GUNS FROM POSITIONS IN TOWN'S CITADEL. OFFICIAL
CASUALTY TOLL WAS ONE SOLDIER KILLED AND 29 RPT 29
WOUNDED, WHICH BRINGS TOTAL ARMY-POLICE CASUALTIES
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IN SIDONWOUNDED, WHICH BRINGS TOTAL ARMY-POLICE CASUALTIES

IN SIDON TO 9 DEAD AND 43 WOUNDED SINCE
FIGHTING BEGAN ON FEB 26.

2. ABOVE INCIDENT APPARENTLY PROVOKED RENEWED
EXCHANGES OF FIRE BETWEEN LEBANESE TROOPS AND SIDON
INSURGENTS DURING EVENING HOURS MAR 3. WE UNDER-
STAND THAT IT ALSO CAUSED ARMY LEADERSHIP TO CONSIDER
LAUNCHING ALL-OUT CLEAN-UP OPERATION IN SIDON MAR 4,
BUT THIS IDEA APPARENTLY WAS SCOTCHED AND CEASE FIRE
RESTORED WHEN PLO'S ABU ZA'IM SUCCEEDED IN ARRESTING
ALLEGED INSTIGATOR OF INCIDENT (IDENTIFIED AS A
LEBANESE LEFTIST THUG) AND TURNED HIM OVER TO GOL
AUTHORITIES. HIS ACCOMPLICES ARE STILL BEING SOUGHT,
BUT THERE SEEMS TO BE NO INFO REGARDING THEIR WHERE-
ABOUTS, NOR HAS THERE BEEN ANY EXPLANATION OF HOW ABU
ZA'IM MANAGED TO LAY HIS HANDS ON ALLEGED INSTIGATOR
SO HANDILY.

3. AS OF MID-DAY MAR 4, SIDON REPORTEDLY WAS AGAIN
QUIET BUT STILL UNDER INSURGENT CONTROL, AND "NEGOTIA-
TIONS" WERE EVIDENTLY STILL IN PROGRESS BETWEEN GOL-
PLO TEAM AND LEFTIST SIDONIAN ELEMENTS. PRESSURES
REPORTED REFTEL ON SOLH CABINET TO RESIGN ARE STILL IN
EVIDENCE, BUT WE EXPECT NO DECISIVE DEVELOPMENTS ON
THIS FRONT UNTIL AFTER CABINET MEETING WITH PRES
FRANGIE, REPORTEDLY SCHEDULED FOR MAR 5.

4. MAR 3 WITNESSED MASS FUNERAL IN SIDON OF 8 PERSONS
KILLED IN CLASHES REPORTED OVER PAST SEVERAL DAYS.
ALTHOUGH ATMOSPHERE WAS CHARGED WITH TENSION, FUNERALS
PROCEEDED WITHOUT INCIDENT.
HOUGHTON

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NNN

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